The first one includes the Bateke-Banfumu-Baboma, among whom ornaments are relatively rare for the women as well as for the men. 301 171

The second one encompasses all the peoples in the region of Lake Leopold II and the lower Lukenie and is characterized by the solid brass necklace worn by the women and the ornaments trimmed with cowries and the brass plaques worn by the dignitaries and chiefs.

The third one includes the Ipanga and the Batitu, with the

142 516 855

Fig. 107. A Group of Batitu Children.

belt ornamented with brass beads, rings on the fingers and toes, and solid brass rings worn above the ankles, all of which are peculiar to the women.

The fourth group is characterized by the sheath of brass rings covering the arm from wrist to elbow and worn as much by the men as by the women of the Bokala-Yaelima.

The fifth group includes the Bena Dibele-Kole region, where imported ornaments have replaced the primitive ones. [186]

In addition to all these adornments used regularly in common, everyday life, the native also has ornaments reserved for show and ceremony. 301

593x [882] If the whole family [26] suffers through the misbehaviour of adolescents, the latter will not be spared by the father. But the mother will often take their sides for, not belonging to her husband's family, she allows only her heart to speak. The familial-political organization of this people requires that fondness have its limits; otherwise it could lead to disorder and anarchy.

593x 855 It cannot be said of Nkundó parents, as one often reads about other peoples of the Congo, that they do not care for their children, who are self-sufficient and obliged to provide for their own needs from the age of six or seven. Our people are always feeding and even coddling their children; even when the latter are married they are always well received in their parents' home and lavishly treated. It is quite true that the young people spend much time in the forest looking for various kinds of food, but that is part of their games and amusements, a phase of their education, and at the same time their contribution to the maintenance of the household (a contribution which cannot be omitted from any serious education, and it is regrettable that it should be omitted by so many European families. (1)

1. Education will be dealt with more extensively in Chapter X, Article VIII.

593x 581 In the matter of marriage parents generally respect the feelings of their children. A father who is motivated by avarice and, above all, by the need for a certain sum of money or its equivalent, may sometimes let the voice of self-interest predominate over that of the heart.

It goes without saying that one may encounter aberrations of fatherly feeling, but such cases are exceedingly rare. (2)

2. For an example see Chapter II, Article XI, 3, B.

593x Though parents love their children without distinction and without consideration of their faults, vices, etc., they are not exempt from a certain amount of partiality; a particular child [27] will

1. Clothing. Nudity.

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855 Until he has reached the age of discretion and even a little later, the Nkundó child wears nothing more around his loins than a belt of beads or a plain string usually adorned with some amulet. Nobody is shocked by this rudimentary attire. Parents take great interest in the adornment of their children; from a very early age [301] they are seen wearing belts of trading beads, bracelets, rings around the ankles made of iron, copper, or brass, and in addition, at the present time, glass beads above the knees.

291 As the child grows older the clothing increases. From the outset there are differences on the basis of sex.

The boy acquires a thin strip of cloth which is attached to his string or belt simply by folding back the two ends. The cloth falls between his legs without being tight, allowing for great freedom of movement and the circulation of air; this is an excellent precaution against perspiration due to extreme heat, but it is not very effective protection against indiscreet looks, at least in certain positions. The fabric made of raffia may be decorated to a greater or a lesser extent. In former times there existed different kinds, which we need not describe here. The length of the hanging borders is dictated by vanity. The string was often replaced by a raffia belt or -- among prominent men -- by a leather thong.

The woman's garment consists of a broad raffia belt whose two ends are gradually narrowed, ending in cords which are tied on the [53] stomach. In the center of this belt (nkásá (1) a ball of raffia

1. Or bokangá, bokangá wá nkásá. Among the Bombwanja it is called likóngâ.

fibers is attached (bonkoko). A piece of cloth (efufa or lofufa) whose width may vary from 3 centimeters to 20 centimeters or more, depending on the age and the wearer's intensity of the feeling of modesty, is attached to the cords and falls more or less low on the body. For a [292] feast or display the efufa is replaced with a more valuable and longer [84] piece of cloth (intólo or, among the Elángá of Losanganya, ifika).

Article I. Girls

584 According to Nkundó custom it is acceptable for an expected child, not yet born or still very young, to be promised in marriage to X or Y. This practice was formerly very common and is still quite prevalent today. It is called banda bǒna or bǒmoto, literally, "to count a child" or "to count a woman." The ikulá is paid at the time of the promise. Later the matter is carried out in the usual fashion; the other parts of the bride price are paid either while the fiancée is young or, preferably, at the time when she goes to her husband.

584 ●855 Until that time, if one of the girl's relatives is already a wife of a polygamist husband-to-be or of one of his relatives, the child is brought up in her husband's family from a fairly early age, depending on the circumstances. She lives with her relative. She may be barely seven or eight years old, for example. If no one in her husband's clan can take care of her, [232] she spends only one or two weeks there to become acquainted, little by little, with people and places; she repeats the visit from time to time. Her mother accompanies her, for being so young she could not get used to being there alone, without support, without her parents. Therefore it is necessary to wait till she is old enough to be somewhat independent and able to manage by herself. That time usually comes around the [145] beginning of puberty, thus sometime between the ages of twelve and fifteen.

584 833 Like an adult woman, she is already called bompáka or wǎlí, depending on the portion of the bride price that has been paid. She has all the duties and privileges of a wife: sexual relations, food preparation, care of the household, etc. There is no set date or age for the beginning of cohabitation. This matter is settled between the husband and his parents-in-law. The latter do not have the right to [606] delay the time, even if their daughter is still too young, but they can make use of their great influence over their son-in-law. The modern [78] [571] generation is not shocked by sexual relations between an adulterer [sic] and a girl who has not reached puberty. Besides, all is in order from the legal standpoint; since the man has paid the bride price, he is the

584 572 When an engagement is arranged for an expected child, the events may betray the hopes of the parents; and the child for whom the ikulá has been paid may turn out to be a boy. This mischance is dealt with in the following manner: either the suitor waits for the birth of a girl, or an alliance of friendship and mutual assistance (boseka, see Chapter I, Part 1, Article III) is established between him and the newborn child. Such an alliance is called lifia já jwende, "the marriage of men," (matrimonium viri). In no case is restitution made for the ikulá that has been paid. If the friendship between the two men remains unbroken later, it results in the marriage of the daughter of the man for whom the ikulá was paid before his birth, to the man who paid it or to his son or grandson. No new ikulá is paid for such a marriage; the payment of the bride price simply has to be completed in the usual fashion.

584 A man may acquire a young child for himself, or for a son, a younger brother, etc. In the past the former was more frequently the case, for the old men kept the women for themselves and wanted [234] to benefit from having them before leaving them to the youths as inheritance. But the latter situation also arose.

The purpose [of obtaining a young child as wife for a relative] was to prevent inexperienced youths who were not able to defend themselves from being deprived of the means of obtaining a wife should the father die prematurely and the heirs monopolize the harem and bride-price valuables to their own profit, which theoretically they have a right to do. This practice is thus a means of favoring a son or other relative by furnishing him with a wife earlier than is customary. Nowadays this is even a stronger reason [178] than in the past, because boys marry earlier than formerly.

Other reasons for obtaining a child as a wife are involved in the two above-mentioned instances. There is a greater certainty of getting one's money's worth; valuables can disappear for various reasons during long unproductive years.

584 ● 855 But the most fundamental reason, in my opinion, is the one very often invoked by the Nkundó, namely the opportunity of personally attending to the future wife's education. There is no

584 855 question but that it is in the husband's interest to take care of it himself. He can accustom her from childhood on to special circumstances, to the laws of the clan, to the particular habits (virtues, faults, way of living, etc.) of his family, his wives, and, last but not least, himself. He can mold her according to his tastes and desires. Enormous advantages result from his success in doing so. This does not mean that he takes care of her personally, for he knows he is not a born educator. He therefore usually prefers to hand this [598] task over to his mother (or aunt or sister), who enjoys this obligation and likes to help her son and to participate directly and intimately in his household.

584 572 A childhood engagement between their respective offspring often results from an alliance between "friends." If the children later on do not want the marriage, that is all there is to it. Restitution of payments is made, or a substitution is arranged. Such a situation arose while this book was being written. [235] At least twenty years ago, Lokóta of Bolíngo and Inílio of Bonjóku made a bond of friendship (bóseka). The former begot a boy (Ituwó), the latter a girl (Lokóku). The parents arranged the engagement of their children by means of the ikuló payment. When Ituwó grew old enough to marry, he had no desire to marry Lokóku, for his heart was taken by another. But he had a younger brother, Itoko, who had affectionate feelings for Lokóku. Ituwó explained the situation to his mother (since his father had died in the interim), and she resumed the relationship with Inílio. They all came to an agreement without difficulty. Itoló therefore married Lokóló in place of his elder brother, after paying the bride price for her.

584 If a little girl is not satisfied with the union that has been arranged she is free, according to the rules of law, to break it -- and not simply by failing to give her consent. Note that in such a case the husband is not entitled to any compensation for having raised this child.

In spite of the advantages involved in childhood unions, they should be rigorously held in check, since the affections often stray from bonds formed at such an early age. More should be done to

act is equivalent to giving up his rights.

The wife's family makes no effort to keep the children born of a broken marriage. On the contrary, they insist that the husband pay the necessary valuables in order to retain his rights over his legitimate progeny. Nevertheless, they cannot force him to do so; the father is entirely free either to take his children or [412] to choose a given portion of the bride price in preference to them. But he is obliged to choose between the two alternatives.

All the natives care about their children. Therefore an indifference to them and preference for getting back the entire bride price is altogether unusual. Instances such as the following do occur, however.

Bumba, daughter of Lokâ of Bokenyola (Losenge, Bomwanja) was married to Elfimîlele of Losôli. After some years of marriage, the latter repudiated his pregnant wife for reasons unknown to me. Although attempts were made to show him the stupidity of his act, nothing would move him. Bumba returned to her brother Iffsô and there gave birth to a daughter. Iffsô asked the father to come and see his child and at the same time be reconciled with his wife. Elfimîlele refused. After a time, Bumba was married to another man, but that marriage did not last. A bankitsâ was substituted for her, and she was married to Bokângo of Bokangê. The latter paid a bride price of 80 rings for her. Elfimîlele was asked to come and get what was due him. This time he came. He took everything, without leaving the slightest thing as payment for his daughter. He was asked to leave 25 rings in order not to be deprived of his rights over his child. He wanted to hear nothing of this suggestion; he preferred to take back his bride price in its entirety. The daughter, Bombîla, is about to marry Bolongîlokolo of Bompela (Bokitola). The bride price to be paid will be received by her mother's clan, and her father will receive nothing at all. He can never claim the slightest payment from his son-in-law. Besides, the latter is not legally his son-in-law; for from the legal standpoint Elfimîlele is not his father-in-law. Bombîla, for her part, is no longer required to recognise her father, since he has disowned her. She belongs solely to her mother's clan, and her father's family can never again make any claim upon her or her descendants.

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Article IV. Nursing
Article V. Naming
Article VI. The question of twins
Article VII. Circumcision
Article VIII. Education
Article IX. Rights over the children [464]

Article I. Preliminaries

1. Generalities

842 The Nkundó like to have children. Not only do they like to have daughters, as some too superficial colonials sometimes maintain, but they like to have boys just as much. It is true that a daughter carries the hope of a bride price and all it represents for polygamists eager for pagan glory and carnal pleasures; yet a real preference for children of the weaker sex is seldom observed. What one does encounter, just as in Europe for that matter, is a desire to have a child of a particular sex when, for example, the other is already abundantly represented in the household. Thus a native who already has several boys but no girl or only one, will make offerings to obtain a sister for the boys. That he should do so is hardly astonishing since among these people a sister is the proper and sometimes the only means by which a man can acquire a wife. On the other hand, a father whose progeny are exclusively, or almost exclusively, members of the female sex ardently desires the birth of a son, an heir to the fruits of his labor and someone who would be able to aid and assist him in his old age by building him a hut, clearing the forest for him, and bringing him game or the products of fishing.

842 ●855 Actually one seldom hears these preferences expressed. The impression one gets is rather that the Nkundó love their children as such and also because, whatever their sex, they greatly contribute to the reinforcement of his social position; the two motives are inseparable in practice.

It is sometimes maintained that the natives do not refuse to have children because their coming does not inconvenience them in any way, nor do they impose crushing financial obligations

892 upon them; their upbringing costs them nothing, whereas among
855 Whites the maintenance, dress, food, instruction, and occupational placement involve considerable expenses. It cannot be [465] denied that while the modern European is exacting from all these viewpoints, enchained and blocked by an ever growing multitude of needs, the material life of the native is simple and his necessities are reduced to an indispensable minimum. Nevertheless, it can hardly be said that it is as easy for him to raise a large family with many children as it is to have the responsibility of a smaller number. Without speaking of clothing -- especially at the present time -- there is the food for growing children, which forces him to clear a greater expanse of forest and to work harder at the various ways of fishing and hunting; and when the time comes for the sons to find wives, he is the one who must arrange to procure the valuables needed for a bride price.

For their part, Nkundó women like to transmit life as much as the men, if not more so. Pregnancy may make them disagreeable and grumpy and sometimes cause them pain, but they put up with it and, as a very general rule, do not think of depriving themselves on that account of the happiness of giving birth to a cute little creature, of nursing it, of carrying it in their arms or on their shoulders. The difficulties and pains of maternity do not repel them. Although later, during the payment of her daughter's bride price, a Nkundó woman's greed will lead her to loudly claim the payment due her and even sometimes destroy her child's love because of delaying this financial operation, the delay does not come to their minds until the time comes.

In short, the Nkundó woman feels a perfectly natural, maternal love for her child.

There are of course exceptions to this general rule. And
842 the contrary would be astonishing for a pagan population who give
855 free rein to all their passions or, at least, restrain them only very
152 [466] slightly, and whose love is far from the perfection one may find among a people ennobled by fifteen centuries of Christianity. Moreover -- as all the preceding pages testify -- our Nkundó are not fashioned from a uniform mold notwithstanding the impression given by certain colonial and ethnological works. All the individual

differences can be found here, although they are less apparent to a European observer since we usually approach the natives as a group and our contact with them is often too impersonal.

2. Abortion

A great enemy of maternal love is the practice of abortion, which has always been known to the Nkundó. Here we cannot describe all the prescriptions used for that purpose. It will be sufficient to enumerate the reasons for which they have recourse to this practice. They are as follows:

1) A woman's lasciviousness: the procreation and subsequent care of a child to some extent prevent the indulging in carnal pleasures. Formerly this cause of abortion was nonexistent or very rare. Needless to say, it has become more common, especially in the centers where it is constantly on the increase and where, in addition, occasional or regular "housekeepers" learn new means of sterilization and abortion.

2) A woman's antipathy or persistent anger toward her husband may encourage her to prevent conception or destroy its effect.

3) An excessive weakening of the mother's organism caused by a large number of conceptions and childbirths at too short intervals.

4) The encumberance and the difficulty of watching, carrying, and taking care of many small children -- bflota bokokesano [467] wà bára mɔtɔfɛlá mɔtɔfɛlá. This reason is especially important for well-known dancers.

It goes without saying that several of these motives may be combined in the same person. For instance, I knew of a woman who aborted at the time of her eighth child. Her recurrent pregnancies, together with continuous work, had greatly reduced her strength. A palaver with her husband was the last straw; she decided to get rid of the fruit she carried in her body.

Outside of these exceptions the natives of this country ardently desire their own continuation through a large number of progeny. (1)

1. The same is not true elsewhere. Examples to that effect are cited from regions that are